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September 27, 2013

via hand delivery

City Manager Doug Thomas
City of Lakeland

RE: Lakeland Police Department

Dear Mr. Thomas:

You are well aware of my concerns with the Lakeland Police Department. Throughout this year, I have expressed my serious reservations about the condition of the Lakeland Police Department and the lack of leadership at the department. The documented problems have included:

- Failure of the Lakeland Police Department to comply with the Public Records laws of the state;
- Insufficient training and supervision of officers;
- Improper and delayed investigations;
- Promotion of unqualified personnel;
- Improper handling of evidence and poor report writing;
- Lack of truthfulness by some officers;
- Interference by Internal Affairs with a criminal investigation; and
- The existence of a culture of sexually inappropriate behavior by officers while on duty at the Lakeland Police Department.

When serious problems exist in an organization, the most critical thing to do is look first to the leadership and hold it accountable. Rather than taking action to deal with the obvious problems at the Lakeland Police Department, you and the City have decided to take a different course - one that endangers the citizens. From the City's decision to spend a quarter of a million dollars on repressing the Grand Jury Presentment, to setting up the Lakeland Police Department Advisory Commission, which has relied on the chief and you to tell them if any problems existed, the City's chosen course of action has been to stonewall, filibuster and hope that the

serious problems just go away. Much to no one's surprise, that has not happened and "Rome" continues to burn.

Yesterday, I charged Lakeland Police Officer Julio Pagan with two counts of Armed Sexual Battery by a Law Enforcement Officer and Armed Aggravated Stalking. While Officer Pagan will be held responsible for his criminal behavior and will be prosecuted by my office, this case has revealed, yet again, a deeper problem - one of which you have been well aware and simply chose to ignore at the public's peril.

On August 12, 2013, Officer Pagan responded to a domestic call at the home of the victim. Later that same day, one of the citizens involved in the domestic call was sexually battered by Officer Pagan. Pagan was on duty and wearing his Lakeland Police Department uniform and issued firearm. The victim was obviously traumatized by this, but was afraid to report the sexual battery. Officer Pagan returned to the victim's home on August 23, telling her "You took it like a champ last time." The victim knew why he had returned. The victim had a friend call the Lakeland Police Department for help while she delayed Officer Pagan. When Officer Pagan was called away to respond to a call, the victim herself, then called 911 to report what was happening. The victim and her friend reached out to the Lakeland Police Department for help. They did not receive it. In fact, your 911 dispatcher laughed at the citizens calling for help and made fun of the way one of the individuals was speaking. I'm sure you will recall my letter to Chief Womack of March 26, 2013, wherein I set forth my concerns regarding the Lakeland Police Department's handling of the Tonyo Evans case. There, a Lakeland citizen had to call three times to get police to respond to her finding a gun near children. I also cannot overlook the media report on WTSP from July 8, 2013, which documented a trip LPD 911 dispatchers took to Orlando and then posted sexually suggestive sayings about 911 dispatchers and officers on a social media website. According to the report, your Department took no action, finding that what the dispatchers did on their own time was none of the Department's business. The culture that exists at the Lakeland Police Department is appalling and apparently encouraged. What does it take to get you to act appropriately?

Officer Pagan's victim asked for and was told a patrol car would respond to her home. That never happened. Instead of sending help, the LPD 911 dispatcher, who was hired during Chief Womack's tenure as chief, contacted Sgt. Doug Brown, who had been promoted by Chief Womack to sergeant in July 2013. The sergeant, with knowledge that a Lakeland Citizen called the Lakeland Police Department to report that one of its officers was acting inappropriately while on duty, did nothing to investigate. When questioned about what he did to investigate, Sgt. Brown stated: "I'm pretty sure, I know I, I know I tried to call her, but I don't remember if I ever got in touch with her." When asked if he remembered speaking with the victim, Sgt. Brown did not recall speaking with her and could not remember if he left a voicemail. The sergeant had the victim's name, address and sufficient specifics to investigate - yet did nothing. It is outrageous that this was the Lakeland Police Department's response to the 911 calls. Days later, Officer Pagan again attempted to sexually batter the victim while on duty. Fortunately, he was unsuccessful in his attempts. It was not until the victim reported Officer Pagan's actions to her landlord, because she wanted to move to get away from the officer and the landlord contacted someone he knew at the Lakeland Police Department, did anything happen in this case. Your Police Department's failure to properly respond to the call for help from the victim and her

friend on August 23, resulted in an officer, who has committed sexual battery while on duty, being allowed to continue in his capacity as an armed Lakeland Police Department officer for almost one month. There is no excuse for this. Blame cannot be placed on prior administrations. This case exemplifies the many problems at the Lakeland Police Department and is indicative of the lack of leadership and broken culture at the Department. The Lakeland Police Department, under Chief Womack's leadership seems to be more of a threat than a protector to the public. The Lakeland Police Department has become a second - or even third rate agency and an embarrassment to the citizens of Lakeland. It is broken.

Mr. Thomas, it is past time for action. Chief Lisa Womack continues to prove she is incapable of leading the Lakeland Police Department. We are approaching the three-year anniversary of her hiring and the problems at the department only seem to get worse. The many fine officers of the Lakeland Police Department deserve effective and competent leadership at the department. This is not the time for town hall meetings or marketing professors to "package" reports. This is not the time for committee meetings or saying: "Things are all right." The City must act now and take decisive action. The security and safety of Lakeland citizens are at stake.

Sincerely,



JERRY HILL
State Attorney

cc: Chief Lisa Womack
Mayor Gow Fields
Commissioner Justin Troller
Commissioner Phillip Walker
Commissioner Keith Merritt
Commissioner Edie Yates
Commissioner Don Selvage
Commissioner Howard Wiggs